



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Richard Hudson (R-NC)
Subcommittee on Transportation Security
Committee on Homeland Security**

“Utilizing Canine Teams to Detect Explosives and Mitigate Threats”

Remarks as Prepared

First, I would like to thank all of our witnesses for their participation. We know your time is valuable and we appreciate you being here today to discuss this important topic.

Most of us who have dogs know how incredibly intelligent and capable they are at detecting the slightest changes in their environments. When that intelligence is coupled with highly selective breeding, months of intensive training, and break-through developments in science and technology, canines become one of the most trusted assets for law enforcement and military operations in critical environments, and they serve as one of the most reliable security tools that exist today.

TSA has the second largest number of explosives detection canine teams in the federal government after the Department of Defense. TSA’s National Explosives Detection Canine Team Program has a critical mission: to deter and detect the introduction of explosives into the Nation’s transportation systems. With 985 teams today, including 675 teams handled by local law enforcement and 310 teams handled by TSA inspectors, that is twice the number of teams that existed eight years ago.

While we have come a long way in recent years, I believe TSA can and should continue to increase its use of canines in all aspects of its mission – from passenger and baggage screening to air cargo screening. One way TSA has diversified its canine program is by incorporating passenger screening canine teams into its risk-based security initiative known as Managed Inclusion.

This initiative uses a combination of Behavior Detection Officers and passenger- screening canine teams to conduct a real-time threat assessment of passengers at certain airports to give them access to Pre-Check benefits on a flight-by-flight basis. The canines used by TSA to conduct passenger screening represent a less-invasive, highly effective approach, and I would like to examine how canines can

become a primary layer of security at airports, not just through Managed Inclusion, but as an everyday central layer of passenger screening operations.

In addition, TSA is currently working with other federal entities to establish common guidelines and a baseline standard for federal, state, local, and private sector explosive detection canine assets. This Committee and many stakeholders have long advocated for establishing common standards, and I am hopeful that TSA will continue to make progress in this area. I look forward to hearing from our TSA witnesses on whether common standards will help us move forward in providing the air cargo industry with the ability to utilize third-party canine teams to screen cargo. I believe we will hear from at least one of our witnesses today that this initiative is long overdue.

In January 2013, GAO released a report on TSA's Canine Program that offered three recommendations to TSA, including analyzing available data to identify areas that are working well and those that need corrective action; assessing the overall effectiveness of passenger screening canines as compared to traditional canine teams; and coordinating with airport operators to deploy teams to the highest-risk airports. GAO has informed the Committee that it is prepared to close its first recommendation and that TSA has made progress on addressing the other two recommendations. I look forward to receiving a status update from our GAO witness here today.

Finally, it is important to note that the FY 2015 DHS Appropriations bill that passed the House Appropriations Committee two weeks ago includes an additional \$5 million for TSA canine teams, which would allow TSA to accelerate deployment and training of new teams. I am pleased to see this increase included in the bill and will continue to work with Chairman Carter and the rest of my colleagues to ensure full funding for this critical layer of security.

Again, I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here. I now recognize the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Richmond, for an opening statement.

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